

## **“IRAQI REFUGEES: CAN THE U.S. DO MORE TO HELP?”**

### ***JOINT BRIEFING BY THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEES ON INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS AND OVERSIGHT AND THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA***

#### **OPENING STATEMENT BY CHAIRMAN BILL DELAHUNT \*REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY\***

**February 26, 2008**

This joint briefing by the Subcommittee on Oversight and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia will come to order. Let me first thank Chairman Ackerman and Ranking Member Pence for arranging this joint briefing. On behalf of our Subcommittee's ranking member, Mr. Rohrabacher, and myself, we are pleased to work together on this issue and look forward to other joint efforts.

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell was right when he told President Bush prior to the invasion of Iraq that “You are going to be the proud owner of 25 million people. You will own all of their hopes, aspirations, and problems. You’ll own it all.” He called this the “Pottery Barn rule” – you break it, you own it.

Well, we own a desperate humanitarian crisis with profound consequences if not urgently addressed.

There are more than 4.5 million Iraqis who are today either refugees outside of Iraq or so-called IDP's – internally displaced persons – primarily as a result of the sectarian cleansing that has occurred in Iraq over the past five years. I would submit that this sad reality imposes a moral responsibility on this Administration and this Congress – for we cannot deny that the proximate cause of this human tragedy is the invasion of Iraq and its aftermath.

It is believed by many that this is an American-made crisis.

Our response must therefore be timely, decisive, and fully-resourced – not simply because it is right and reflects our values. But because it will prevent the further erosion of how we are viewed in the region.

We should be reminded of testimony at earlier hearings as to the declining opinion of the United States. Nowhere has America's image and reputation fallen farther than in the Muslim world.

In five key Middle Eastern countries – Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, and Lebanon – negative ratings of the United States rose to 82 percent by 2006.

Eight in ten Muslims believe that the United States' goal is to weaken and divide Islam.

And it gets worse. On average, only seven percent of Middle Eastern Arabs believe that attacks on civilians are ever justified; but a majority (53 percent) approve of attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq.

And 65 percent of people in Turkey, a long-standing U.S. ally, fear that the United States might attack it in a dispute. Majorities agree with that belief in Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, and Kuwait. Kuwait! A country the United States liberated from Saddam Hussein in 1991.

So, it is in our self-interest to prioritize this issue and act accordingly because, as the State Department's own Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World has found, "hostility toward the U.S. makes achieving our policy goals far more difficult."

There should be a realization that we do not want to repeat what occurred in Afghanistan – When after the Soviets were defeated we ignored that country, as we later learned, much to our peril. We cannot afford to allow a breeding ground for terrorism to fester in the Middle East that will haunt us for generations to come.

I would also point out that working through the United Nations and U.N.-affiliated organizations will further state to the world that we are dedicated to working in a cooperative fashion with other nations. And that multilateralism is a significant facet of our foreign policy.

And let's be clear – it's going to cost money. Estimates vary between \$1.5 and \$2 billion. But we should remind ourselves that that figure is less than one week's worth of war in Iraq, and represents a significant investment in our national security.

To discuss this crisis, we are pleased to have here today L. Craig Johnstone, the UN's Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, and Mr. Rafiq Tschannen, the Chief of Mission for the International Organization for Migration in Iraq and Jordan.

Amb. Johnstone is a former diplomat and U.S. State Department official with extensive foreign aid, refugee and private-sector experience. Appointed as UNHCR's Deputy High Commissioner in July 2007, he comes to UNHCR after more than five years as European vice president and general manager for The Boeing Company.

Amb. Johnstone began his international career in 1965 on assignment with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in Viet Nam, where he worked on refugee programs. He spent five years in Viet Nam, first with USAID and later as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer. He left the U.S. Foreign Service in 1989 to take up positions with the Cabot Corporation based in Brussels. He returned to government in 1994 as director for resources, plans and policy in the Office of the Secretary of State, where he remained for five years. He was then a senior vice president for the U.S.

Chamber of Commerce before joining The Boeing Company. Welcome Ambassador. It's nice to see you again.

Rafiq A. Tschannen is the Chief of Mission for the International Organization for Migration office in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, where he is responsible for all organizational, management and budget activities. In this position, he began the IOM Iraq Mission and is also responsible for liaising with all UN agencies on the issues surrounding these states. He has previously served as the Head of Administration and Finance Unit at IOM in Kosovo, Cyprus, Iraq and Jordan. He also spent three years as the Head of Mission for Caritas Switzerland in Kosovo. Prior to that, he had an extensive career in international business and finance. He has a Bachelor and a Masters of Science in Business Administration from Century University, CA and a post graduate diploma in Islamic banking. Welcome Mr. Tschannen.

Now let me turn to Mr. Rohrabacher for any comments he may choose to make.